

South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness

Financial Statements

*For the Year Ended June 30, 2021*





SOUTH CAROLINA OFFICE OF THE STATE AUDITOR  
1401 Main Street, Suite 1200 • Columbia, SC 29201

September 28, 2021

Members of the Board of Trustees  
South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness  
Columbia, South Carolina

This report on the audit of the financial statements of the South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness for the year ended June 30, 2021, was issued by Greene Finney, LLP, Certified Public Accountants, under contract with the South Carolina Office of the State Auditor.

If you have any questions regarding this report, please let us know.

Respectfully submitted,

George L. Kennedy, III, CPA  
State Auditor

GLKIII/sag



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# Greene Finney, LLP

CERTIFIED PUBLIC ACCOUNTANTS & ADVISORS

## INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT

Mr. George L. Kennedy, CPA  
State Auditor  
Office of the State Auditor  
Columbia, South Carolina

### Report on the Financial Statements

We have audited the accompanying financial statements of the governmental activities and each major fund of South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness ("First Steps"), a nonmajor discretely presented component unit of the State of South Carolina, as of and for the year ended June 30, 2021, and the related notes to the financial statements, which collectively comprise First Steps' basic financial statements as listed in the table of contents.

### *Management's Responsibility for the Financial Statements*

Management is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of these financial statements in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America; this includes the design, implementation, and maintenance of internal control relevant to the preparation and fair presentation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

### *Auditor's Responsibility*

Our responsibility is to express opinions on these financial statements based on our audit. We conducted our audit in accordance with auditing standards generally accepted in the United States of America and the standards applicable to financial audits contained in *Government Auditing Standards*, issued by the Comptroller General of the United States. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements are free from material misstatement.

An audit involves performing procedures to obtain audit evidence about the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements. The procedures selected depend on the auditor's judgment, including the assessment of the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error. In making those risk assessments, the auditor considers internal control relevant to the entity's preparation and fair presentation of the financial statements in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the entity's internal control. Accordingly, we express no such opinion. An audit also includes evaluating the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of significant accounting estimates made by management, as well as evaluating the overall presentation of the financial statements.

We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our audit opinions.

### *Opinions*

In our opinion, the financial statements referred to above present fairly, in all material respects, the respective financial position of the governmental activities and each major fund of South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness as of June 30, 2021, and the respective changes in financial position for the year then ended in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America.

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## ***Other Matters***

### ***Required Supplementary Information***

Accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America require that the management's discussion and analysis, budgetary comparison schedules, schedule of proportionate share of the net pension liability – South Carolina Retirement System, schedule of contributions – South Carolina Retirement System, schedule of proportionate share of the net OPEB liability – South Carolina Health Insurance Trust Fund, and schedule of contributions – South Carolina Health Insurance Trust Fund, as listed in the table of contents, be presented to supplement the basic financial statements. Such information, although not a part of the basic financial statements, is required by the Governmental Accounting Standards Board who considers it to be an essential part of financial reporting for placing the basic financial statements in an appropriate operational, economic, or historical context. We have applied certain limited procedures to the required supplementary information in accordance with auditing standards generally accepted in the United States of America, which consisted of inquiries of management about the methods of preparing the information and comparing the information for consistency with management's responses to our inquiries, the basic financial statements, and other knowledge we obtained during our audit of the basic financial statements. We do not express an opinion or provide any assurance on the information because the limited procedures do not provide us with sufficient evidence to express an opinion or provide any assurance.

### ***Supplementary Information***

Our audit was conducted for the purpose of forming opinions on the financial statements that collectively comprise the First Steps' basic financial statements. The supplementary information, as listed in the table of contents, is presented for purposes of additional analysis and is not a required part of the basic financial statements.

The supplementary information is the responsibility of management and was derived from and relates directly to the underlying accounting and other records used to prepare the basic financial statements. Such information has been subjected to the auditing procedures applied in the audit of the basic financial statements and certain additional procedures, including comparing and reconciling such information directly to the underlying accounting and other records used to prepare the basic financial statements or to the basic financial statements themselves, and other additional procedures in accordance with auditing standards generally accepted in the United States of America. In our opinion, the supplementary information is fairly stated, in all material respects, in relation to the basic financial statements as a whole.

### ***Other Reporting Required by Government Auditing Standards***

In accordance with *Government Auditing Standards*, we have also issued our report dated September 28, 2021 on our consideration of First Steps' internal control over financial reporting and on our tests of its compliance with certain provisions of laws, regulations, contracts, and grant agreements and other matters. The purpose of that report is to describe the scope of our testing of internal control over financial reporting and compliance and the results of that testing, and not to provide an opinion on internal control over financial reporting or on compliance. That report is an integral part of an audit performed in accordance with *Government Auditing Standards* in considering First Steps' internal control over financial reporting and compliance.

*Greene Finney, LLP*

Greene Finney, LLP  
Mauldin, South Carolina  
September 28, 2021



**South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness  
Management's Discussion and Analysis  
For the Year Ended June 30, 2021**

The Management's Discussion and Analysis ("MD&A") of the South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness Board of Trustees provides an overview of the financial activities for the year ended June 30, 2021.

**FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS**

The South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness ("First Steps") prepared its financial statements in accordance with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles ("GAAP") and follows pronouncements from the Governmental Accounting Standards Board ("GASB").

As of and for the year ended June 30, 2021:

- First Steps' total net position increased by \$7,613,526 and its assets and deferred outflows of resources exceeded its liabilities and deferred inflows of resources (net position) by \$2,471,136, which includes \$15,605,503 in restricted net position of which the majority is restricted for the 4K preschool program and early childhood services.
- First Steps received \$36,131,007 in appropriations from the State of South Carolina, the significant majority of which was disbursed for funding the county partnerships and the 4K programs throughout the state.
- First Steps received state, local, and private grants totaling \$4,771,065 and COVID Relief Funds from the State totaling \$4,222,162.

**USING THESE AUDITED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS**

The audited financial statements presented in this document include both government-wide and fund financial statements.

**Government-wide Statements:**

Government-wide statements include a Statement of Net Position and a Statement of Activities. These statements display information about First Steps as a whole. The government-wide financial statements of First Steps are presented on the accrual basis of accounting and provide short-term and long-term information about First Steps.

**Fund Statements:**

The fund financial statements include the governmental funds' Balance Sheet and Statement of Revenue, Expenditures, and Change in Fund Balances. The governmental fund financial statements are presented on the modified accrual basis of accounting which focus on the near term inflows and outflows of resources available for expenditure for the fiscal year.

First Steps was created specifically to carry out the objectives of The South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness Act and to lessen the burdens on government by overseeing the initiative for improving early childhood development of the Act.

**South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness  
Management's Discussion and Analysis  
For the Year Ended June 30, 2021**

**Statements of Net Position** –The Statements of Net Position provide a summary of First Steps' financial condition at the end of the 2021 and 2020 fiscal years; the statement reports all assets, deferred outflows of resources, liabilities, and deferred inflows of resources using the accrual basis of accounting.

**SOUTH CAROLINA FIRST STEPS TO SCHOOL READINESS  
STATEMENTS OF NET POSITION**

	2021	2020
Current assets	\$ 17,720,023	\$ 10,542,491
Capital assets, net	21,766	45,511
Total assets	<u>17,741,789</u>	<u>10,588,002</u>
Deferred outflows of resources	<u>2,755,005</u>	<u>1,725,456</u>
Current liabilities	1,179,850	847,870
Net pension liability	6,548,225	5,500,745
Net OPEB liability	5,336,555	4,170,259
Other noncurrent liabilities	144,213	120,827
Total liabilities	<u>13,208,843</u>	<u>10,639,701</u>
Deferred inflows of resources	<u>4,816,815</u>	<u>6,816,147</u>
Investment in capital assets	21,766	45,511
Restricted	15,605,503	1,275,795
Unrestricted	<u>(13,156,133)</u>	<u>(6,463,696)</u>
Total net position	<u>\$ 2,471,136</u>	<u>\$ (5,142,390)</u>

Current assets have increased from \$10,542,491 at June 30, 2020 to \$17,720,023 at June 30, 2021 which is an increase of \$7,177,532. This is primarily due to an increase in cash which resulted from First Steps receiving \$4,222,162 of COVID Relief Funds of which the majority of expenditures were incurred during the year ended June 30, 2020. In addition, the 4K pre-school program retained additional cash as it was not able to expend its funds as anticipated due to the COVID pandemic. Total liabilities increased from \$10,639,701 at June 30, 2020 to \$13,208,843 at June 30, 2021, which is an increase of \$2,569,142. The primary cause of the increase is due to First Steps' increased pension and OPEB liabilities. These liabilities increased due to additional staffing at First Steps as well as the total State liability increasing for the year ended June 30, 2021.

**South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness  
Management's Discussion and Analysis  
For the Year Ended June 30, 2021**

**Statements of Activities** – The Statements of Activities reports the revenues and expenses during the 2021 and 2020 fiscal years.

**SOUTH CAROLINA FIRST STEPS TO SCHOOL READINESS  
STATEMENTS OF ACTIVITIES**

	<u>2021</u>	<u>2020</u>
<b>Program Revenues</b>		
State, local and private grants	\$ 8,993,227	\$ 1,006,890
Total program revenues	<u>8,993,227</u>	<u>1,006,890</u>
<b>General Revenues</b>		
State appropriations	36,131,007	35,925,654
Interest income and other revenues	<u>154,690</u>	<u>199,470</u>
Total general revenues	<u>36,285,697</u>	<u>36,125,124</u>
Total revenues	<u>45,278,924</u>	<u>37,132,014</u>
<b>Expenses</b>		
Allocations to other entities	14,633,351	15,806,686
Private 4K provider costs	14,819,034	17,366,735
Contractual services	3,040,570	2,025,824
Salaries	3,350,578	2,946,857
Employer fringe benefits	524,802	340,789
Rent and leases	194,674	239,637
Materials	1,019,761	1,144,769
Travel	58,883	278,648
Depreciation	<u>23,745</u>	<u>25,724</u>
Total expenses	<u>37,665,398</u>	<u>40,175,669</u>
 Increase (decrease) in net position	 7,613,526	 (3,043,655)
 Net position beginning balance	 <u>(5,142,390)</u>	 <u>(2,098,735)</u>
Net position ending balance	<u>\$ 2,471,136</u>	<u>\$ (5,142,390)</u>

Operating revenues of First Steps are largely dependent upon appropriations from the State of South Carolina as well as grants from the state government and private or local donors. The increase in net position is primarily attributed to additional grant revenues under new grant agreements and the receipt of COVID Relief Funds from the State. As a result of these new grants and COVID Relief Funds, program revenues increased by \$7,986,337. First Steps' total expenses decreased from \$40,175,669 for the year ended June 30, 2020 to \$37,665,398 for the year ended June 30, 2021 which was a decrease of \$2,510,271. Due to the COVID pandemic, demand for First Steps' programs was down as compared to the year ended June 30, 2020, which was the primary driver in reduced costs. This is most evident in the decrease in Private 4K provider costs, which decreased from \$17,366,735 for the year ended June 30, 2020 to \$14,819,034 for the year ended June 30, 2021.

**South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness  
Management's Discussion and Analysis  
For the Year Ended June 30, 2021**

**Funds Highlights:**

*Governmental Funds:*

The focus of First Steps' governmental funds is to provide information regarding actual inflows and outflows of spendable resources. The General Fund is the primary operating fund of First Steps, while the Private 4K special revenue fund accounts for the private activities of the 4K program administered by First Steps.

The General Fund's operating revenues are primarily appropriations from the State of South Carolina and state and local grants. For state appropriations, revenues are not budgeted by First Steps, therefore, expenditures are typically matched with appropriations so long as expenditures do not exceed budget. State appropriations and other revenues exceeded First Steps' program expenses resulting in revenues exceeding expenditures by \$6,522,359 for the year ended June 30, 2021. This resulted in an increase in fund balance from the beginning fund balance amount of \$8,913,820 to \$15,436,179, which includes \$14,339,007 in fund balance restricted for the 4K pre-school program, and \$692,893 committed for cash reserve revolving loans and grants to county partnerships, and \$404,279 in unassigned fund balance.

The Private 4K special revenue fund's operating revenues are primarily appropriations from the State of South Carolina. The Private 4K special revenue fund received total revenues of \$15,168,388 and expended \$14,819,034 during the year ended June 30, 2021, resulting in an increase in fund balance of \$349,354. A significant portion of the remaining fund balance has been restricted for funding a portion of the construction of two 4K learning centers. All of the special revenue fund's fund balance is restricted.

**Noncurrent Liabilities:**

First Steps' noncurrent liabilities consist of compensated absences and its proportionate share of the State of South Carolina's net pension and net OPEB liabilities related to the South Carolina Retirement System ("SCRS"). The compensated absences liability includes accrued annual leave earned for which the employees are entitled to paid time off or payment at termination. Compensated absences used or transferred to another agency during the fiscal year were \$217,182 while another \$266,729 were accrued. See note 5 to the financial statements for additional information regarding First Steps' noncurrent liabilities.

First Steps' net pension liability has been recorded in accordance with GASB Statement No. 68 and represents First Steps' share of the State's net pension liability related to the SCRS. The net pension liability as of June 30, 2020 was \$5,500,745 and at June 30, 2021, it had increased to \$6,548,225. The increase is due to an increase in participants applicable to First Steps as well as an increase in the overall pension liability of the State. GASB Statement No. 68 does not affect First Steps' required contributions to the net pension liability. See note 6 to the financial statements for additional information regarding First Steps' pension plan.

First Steps is also required to record its proportionate share of the net OPEB liability in accordance with GASB Statement No. 75 and represents First Steps' share of the State's net OPEB liability related to the State's Retiree Health Insurance Trust Fund. The net OPEB liability as of June 30, 2020 was \$4,170,259 and increased to \$5,336,555 at June 30, 2021, due to an increase in participants applicable to First Steps as well as an increase in the overall OPEB liability of the State. See note 7 to the financial statements for additional information regarding First Steps' OPEB plan.

**South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness  
Management's Discussion and Analysis  
For the Year Ended June 30, 2021**

**Budget Highlights:**

First Steps budgets State appropriations and other funds (earmark, restricted and federal) as they are received during the year. First Steps' original and final budget for the General Fund was \$6,522,877 and \$6,656,780, respectively, for the year ended June 30, 2021. Actual expenditures, on the budgetary basis, totaled \$6,525,880. These amounts were spent primarily on the CDEPP programs (child development program). The total other funds original and final budget was \$35,519,369 and \$38,638,535, respectively. There was an increase of budgeted operating expenditures of \$3,119,166 that primarily drove the change in original and final budgets. Actual expenditures, on the budgetary basis, totaled \$29,178,800. These amounts were spent primarily on allocations to First Steps local county partnerships and the CDEPP programs.

**Current Conditions that are expected to have a Significant Effect on First Steps' Financial Position:**

Over the last year, First Steps saw unprecedented growth while dealing with the impact of the COVID -19 pandemic. First Steps staff converted their operations to virtual for most of the fiscal year while ensuring minimal impacts on operations. First Steps Local Partnerships were challenged to find staff and continue operating while trying to convert as many services as possible to virtual platforms. Due to the challenges of the pandemic, many 4K providers struggled to continue operating while First Steps worked hard to continue to support them virtually. With the challenges the 4K centers faced, the expenditures for tuition dropped from the previous year. During this time, First Steps was committed to keeping the centers open so children were in a learning environment and their parents could continue working.

First Steps initiated a move to a new larger working space due to an increased number of staff and funding as it had outgrown the previous space at 1300 Sumter St. First Steps obtained commitments for several new grants and fund sources. This included the following commitments: a commitment from the Governor's Office for \$5,000,000 in GEER Federal funding and \$887,500 in funding from the South Carolina Department of Social Services ("DSS") through their Federal funding, both of which were spread over fiscal years 2021 and 2022 and were committed to the 4K Program. In addition, \$4,485,914 in ESSER Federal funding from the State Department of Education for fiscal year 2022 was committed to both 4K and Local Partnership activities and services. Private grants were received from the Doris Duke Foundation for \$1,500,000 as well as the Duke Endowment for \$800,000 for the Local Partnerships. In addition, funds were received from DSS associated with the Federal Preschool Development Grant and an extension of a grant from the Blue Cross Blue Shield Foundation received during the prior fiscal year.

The State Legislature included an additional \$15,679,911 in funds for the upcoming 2021-22 fiscal year and added an additional 16 FTE's. This included funding of \$15,435,911 for the 4K Program to implement Statewide expansion. \$244,000 was appropriated for the Early Childhood Advisory Council ("ECAC") and for the recurring cost of the new agency data system, the Knowledge, Information, and Teaming System ("KITS"). These funds will allow for growth in the services provided both at the Local Partnership level as well as the 4K Program over the next several years.

With the work done over the last year and the committed resources, the agency is well positioned to meet its mission going forward.

**South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness  
Management's Discussion and Analysis  
For the Year Ended June 30, 2021**

This discussion and analysis is designed to provide a general overview of the South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness' finances for all of South Carolina's citizens, taxpayers, customers, investors and creditors. This financial report seeks to demonstrate First Steps' accountability for the money it receives. Questions concerning any of the information provided in this report or requests for additional information should be addressed to:

South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness  
636 Rosewood Drive  
Columbia, South Carolina 29201

**South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness  
Statement of Net Position  
June 30, 2021**

**ASSETS**

Current assets:

Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 15,613,891
Grants receivable	2,106,132
Total current assets	<u>17,720,023</u>

Noncurrent assets:

Capital assets, net	21,766
Total noncurrent assets	<u>21,766</u>
Total assets	<u>17,741,789</u>

**DEFERRED OUTFLOWS OF RESOURCES**

Deferred outflows of resources related to pensions	1,350,426
Deferred outflows of resources related to OPEB	1,404,579
Total deferred outflows of resources	<u>2,755,005</u>

**LIABILITIES**

Current liabilities:

Accounts payable	86,781
Accrued salaries and benefits	430,567
Compensated absences	162,502
Unearned revenue	500,000
Total current liabilities	<u>1,179,850</u>

Noncurrent liabilities:

Compensated absences	144,213
Net OPEB liability	5,336,555
Net pension liability	6,548,225
Total noncurrent liabilities	<u>12,028,993</u>
Total liabilities	<u>13,208,843</u>

**DEFERRED INFLOWS OF RESOURCES**

Deferred inflows of resources related to OPEB	2,971,138
Deferred inflows of resources related to pensions	1,845,677
Total deferred inflows of resources	<u>4,816,815</u>

**NET POSITION**

Investment in capital assets	21,766
Restricted for the 4K pre-school program and early childhood services	15,605,503
Unrestricted	<u>(13,156,133)</u>
Total Net Position	<u>\$ 2,471,136</u>

*The notes to the financial statements are an integral part of these financial statements. See accompanying independent auditor's report.*

**South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness  
Statement of Activities  
For the Year Ended June 30, 2021**

**Expenses**

**Governmental Activities – General Government**

Allocations to other entities	\$ 14,633,351
Private 4K provider costs	14,819,034
Contractual services	3,040,570
Salaries	3,350,578
Employer fringe benefits	524,802
Rent and leases	194,674
Materials	1,019,761
Travel	58,883
Depreciation	23,745
Total expenses	<u>37,665,398</u>

**Program Revenues – Operating Grants and Contributions**

State, local, and private grants	4,771,065
COVID Relief Funds	4,222,162
Total program revenues	<u>8,993,227</u>
Net expenses	<u>(28,672,171)</u>

**General Revenues**

State appropriations	36,131,007
Interest income	47,745
Other revenues	106,945
Total general revenues	<u>36,285,697</u>

Change in net position	7,613,526
Net position, July 1, 2020	<u>(5,142,390)</u>
Net position, June 30, 2021	<u><u>\$ 2,471,136</u></u>

*The notes to the financial statements are an integral part of these financial statements. See accompanying independent auditor's report.*



**South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness  
Balance Sheet -  
Governmental Funds  
June 30, 2021**

	<u>General Fund</u>	<u>Private 4K Special Revenue Fund</u>	<u>Total</u>
<b>ASSETS</b>			
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 14,270,970	\$ 1,342,921	\$ 15,613,891
Grants receivable	2,106,132	—	2,106,132
Total Assets	<u>\$ 16,377,102</u>	<u>\$ 1,342,921</u>	<u>\$ 17,720,023</u>
<b>LIABILITIES</b>			
Accounts payable	\$ 10,356	\$ 76,425	\$ 86,781
Accrued salaries and benefits	430,567	—	430,567
Unearned revenue	500,000	—	500,000
Total liabilities	<u>940,923</u>	<u>76,425</u>	<u>1,017,348</u>
<b>FUND BALANCE</b>			
Restricted for the 4K pre-school program and early childhood services	14,339,007	1,266,496	15,605,503
Committed for cash reserve revolving loans	615,971	—	615,971
Committed for county partnership grants	76,922	—	76,922
Unassigned	404,279	—	404,279
Total fund balance	<u>15,436,179</u>	<u>1,266,496</u>	<u>16,702,675</u>
Total liabilities and fund balance	<u>\$ 16,377,102</u>	<u>\$ 1,342,921</u>	<u>\$ 17,720,023</u>

*The notes to the financial statements are an integral part of these financial statements. See accompanying independent auditor's report.*

**South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness  
Reconciliation of the Balance Sheet of the Governmental Funds  
to the Statement of Net Position  
June 30, 2021**

Total fund balance, governmental funds	\$ 16,702,675
Amounts reported for governmental activities in the Statement of Net Position are different because:	
Capital assets used in governmental activities are not current financial resources and therefore are not reported in the fund financial statements, but are reported in governmental activities in the Statement of Net Position. This amount reflects gross capital assets of \$124,735 net of accumulated depreciation of \$102,969.	21,766
The net pension and net OPEB liabilities and related deferred inflows and outflows of resources are not due and payable in the current year and are not included in the fund financial statements, but are included in governmental activities in the Statement of Net Position.	
Net pension liability	(6,548,225)
Net OPEB liability	(5,336,555)
Deferred outflows of resources related to pensions	1,350,426
Deferred inflows of resources related to pensions	(1,845,677)
Deferred outflows of resources related to OPEB	1,404,579
Deferred inflows of resources related to OPEB	(2,971,138)
Compensated absences are not due and payable in the current period and are not included in the fund financial statements, but are included in the governmental activities in the Statement of Net Position	<u>(306,715)</u>
Net position of governmental activities in the Statement of Net Position	<u>\$ 2,471,136</u>

*The notes to the financial statements are an integral part of these financial statements. See accompanying independent auditor's report.*

**South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness**  
**Statement of Revenues, Expenditures, and Change in Fund Balance -**  
**Governmental Funds**  
**For the Year Ended June 30, 2021**

	<u>General Fund</u>	<u>Private 4K Special Revenue Fund</u>	<u>Total</u>
<b>Revenues</b>			
State appropriations	\$ 21,040,169	\$ 15,090,838	\$ 36,131,007
State, local, and private grants	4,710,791	—	4,710,791
COVID Relief Funds	4,222,162	—	4,222,162
Other revenues	30,025	76,920	106,945
Interest income	47,115	630	47,745
Total revenues	<u>30,050,262</u>	<u>15,168,388</u>	<u>45,218,650</u>
<b>Expenditures</b>			
Allocations to other entities	14,633,351	—	14,633,351
Private 4K provider costs	—	14,819,034	14,819,034
Contractual services	3,040,570	—	3,040,570
Salaries	3,301,031	—	3,301,031
Employer fringe benefits	1,279,633	—	1,279,633
Materials	1,019,761	—	1,019,761
Travel	58,883	—	58,883
Rent and leases	194,674	—	194,674
Total expenditures	<u>23,527,903</u>	<u>14,819,034</u>	<u>38,346,937</u>
Change in fund balance	6,522,359	349,354	6,871,713
Fund balance, July 1, 2020	8,913,820	917,142	9,830,962
Fund balance, June 30, 2021	<u>\$ 15,436,179</u>	<u>\$ 1,266,496</u>	<u>\$ 16,702,675</u>

*The notes to the financial statements are an integral part of these financial statements. See accompanying independent auditor's report.*

**South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness  
Reconciliation of the Statement of Revenues, Expenditures,  
and Change in Fund Balance of the Governmental Funds to the  
Statement of Activities  
For the Year Ended June 30, 2021**

Net change in fund balance, governmental funds	\$ 6,871,713
Amounts reported for governmental activities in the Statement of Activities are different because:	
Current year retirement plan contributions are considered a deferred outflow of resources rather than a current year expense in the Statement of Activities	487,385
Current year OPEB contributions are considered a deferred outflow of resources rather than a current year expense in the Statement of Activities	195,768
Some expenses reported in the Statement of Activities do not require the use of current financial resources and therefore are not reported as expenditures in the governmental fund:	
Depreciation	(23,745)
Increase in pension expense due to changes in First Steps' portion of collective pension expense	(52,820)
Decrease in OPEB expense due to changes in First Steps' portion of collective OPEB expense	184,772
Compensated absences	<u>(49,547)</u>
Increase in net position, governmental activities	<u>\$ 7,613,526</u>

*The notes to the financial statements are an integral part of these financial statements. See accompanying  
independent auditor's report.*

SOUTH CAROLINA FIRST STEPS TO SCHOOL READINESS  
NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS  
FOR THE YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2021

**1. Summary of Significant Accounting Policies**

**A. Reporting Entity**

The South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness (“First Steps”) is a non-profit, tax-exempt public charity created specifically to carry out the objectives of The South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness Act and to lessen the burdens on government by overseeing the initiative for improving early childhood development of the Act. First Steps was created through enabling legislation recorded in June of 1999 in Section 59-152-10 of the South Carolina Code of Laws. First Steps is financially accountable to and dependent on the State and is subject to various State procurement, budget, personnel, and other regulations. First Steps is reported as a discretely presented component unit of the State of South Carolina and included in the State's Comprehensive Annual Financial Report.

Operationally, the SC First Steps Executive Director reports to a State Board of Trustees, consisting of 25 voting members and the heads of all South Carolina child-serving agencies. The board is chaired by the Governor of the State of South Carolina (the “Governor”). The Board’s voting members include the Governor or the Governor’s designee, State Superintendent of Education or the State Superintendent of Education’s designee, seven Governor appointees, four members appointed by the President Pro Tempore of the Senate, four members appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the Chairman of the Senate Education Committee, the Chairman of the House Education and Public Works Committee, and the Chief Executive Officers of the Department of Social Services, Department of Health and Environmental Control, Department of Health and Human Services, Department of Disabilities and Special Needs, State Head Start Collaboration Officer, and Children’s Trust of South Carolina. First Steps accomplishes its directives through the use of 46 county partnerships which cover all counties within the state of South Carolina. Each local partnership has its own governing board based on the enabling law, and employs staff as determined by the local board.

First Steps was enacted to help improve school readiness outcomes for the state’s youngest learners and to create public-private partnerships to strengthen the system of early education and care statewide. First Steps implements specific and targeted programs through five broad categories in communities across the state: 1) Family Strengthening, 2) Childcare, 3) Early Education, 4) School Transition, and 5) Health. Each South Carolina county has a First Steps Partnership (with Internal Revenue Service not-for-profit 501(c)3 status), comprised of business and community leaders, early education professionals, parents, faith-based and agency partners. Local First Steps partnerships examine unmet needs in their communities to help local young children and their families. Through its Internal Revenue Service not-for-profit 501(c)3 status, First Steps mobilizes resources beyond state appropriated dollars, leveraging local private and public funds, planned gifts, in-kind contributions, and volunteer hours.

SOUTH CAROLINA FIRST STEPS TO SCHOOL READINESS  
NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS  
FOR THE YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2021

**1. Summary of Significant Accounting Policies (continued)**

**A. Reporting Entity (continued)**

First Steps also co-administers the state's 4-K pre-school program known as the Child Development Education Pilot Program which provides full-day pre-kindergarten to eligible children in both public and private settings. The private portion of this program is included in the Private 4K special revenue fund. South Carolina First Steps serves as the state coordinator for Nurse-Family Partnership and Parents as Teachers. Finally, by Executive Order, First Steps serves as South Carolina's Early Childhood Advisory Council under the federal Head Start reauthorization of 2007.

**B. Basis of Presentation, Measurement Focus and Basis of Accounting**

**Government-wide Financial Statements**

The government-wide financial statements are presented in accordance with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles ("GAAP") using the accrual basis of accounting and following pronouncements issued by the Governmental Accounting Standards Board ("GASB").

All of the functions available to finance First Steps are presented together as general government activities. Financial information for funds that are not available to finance these activities are not included; consequently, the government-wide financial statements exclude fiduciary assets and liabilities, when applicable.

**Fund Financial Statements**

The fund financial statements are used to report First Steps' financial position and results of operations as well as to demonstrate legal compliance and to aid financial management by segregating transactions related to certain government functions or activities. The governmental fund statements are presented on the modified accrual basis. These methods of accounting are described below.

**Measurement Focus and Basis of Accounting**

The government-wide financial statements are reported using the economic resources measurement focus and the accrual basis of accounting. Revenues are recorded when earned or for non-exchange transactions, when all eligibility requirements have been met, and expenses are recorded when a liability is incurred, regardless of the timing of related cash flows.

Governmental fund financial statements are reported using the current financial resources measurement focus and the modified accrual basis of accounting. Revenues are recognized as soon as they are both measurable and available. "Measurable" means that the amount of the transaction can be determined and "available" means collectible within the current period or soon enough thereafter to pay obligations of the current period. For this purpose, First Steps considers major sources of revenues to be available if they are collected within sixty days of the end of the current fiscal year.

SOUTH CAROLINA FIRST STEPS TO SCHOOL READINESS  
NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS  
FOR THE YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2021

**1. Summary of Significant Accounting Policies (continued)**

**B. Basis of Presentation, Measurement Focus and Basis of Accounting (continued)**

**Governmental Fund Types**

General Fund – The General Fund, a major fund, is the operating fund of First Steps and is used to account for all financial transactions and resources with the exception of the revenues and expenditures for the private 4K program providers.

Private 4K Special Revenue Fund – The Private 4K Special Revenue Fund is a major special revenue fund of First Steps. The fund accounts for revenues and expenditures related to the providers of the private 4K program, which offers families choices of pre-kindergarten within both public-school districts and eligible private settings. Private 4K Programs focus on the developmental and learning supports that children must have in order to be ready for school and incorporate evidence-based practices, ongoing assessment and parenting education.

**Cash and Cash Equivalents**

The amounts shown in the accompanying financial statements as *cash and cash equivalents* represent petty cash, cash on deposit in banks, cash equivalents on deposit with external parties, and cash invested in various instruments as a part of the State's cash management pool, an internal investment pool. The internal investment pool is not registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission and does not have other regulatory oversight. Because the cash management pool operates as a demand deposit account, amounts invested in the pool are classified as cash and cash equivalents. The pool includes some long-term investments such as obligations of the United States and certain agencies of the United States, obligations of domestic corporations, certificates of deposit, and collateralized repurchase agreements.

**Cash Management Pool – Allocation of Interest**

The State of South Carolina cash management pool consists of a general deposit account and several special deposit accounts. The State records each fund's equity interest in the general deposit account. All earnings on that account are recorded in the General Fund of the State of South Carolina. In contrast, each special deposit account retains its own earnings.

**Investment Holdings and Basis**

The South Carolina State Treasurer's Office (the "Office") is authorized by statute to invest all State funds. The Office's investment objectives are preservation of capital, maintenance of adequate liquidity, and obtaining the best yield possible within prescribed parameters. To meet those objectives, the Office uses various resources including an investment advisory service, electronic financial quotation and information services, various economic reports, and daily communication with brokers and financial institution investment officers.

To ensure safety of principal, the Office's policy is to limit liquid investments (i.e., those with maturities not exceeding one year) to cash, repurchase agreements (when collateralized by United States Treasury, federal agency or other federally guaranteed obligations with a market value in excess of 100.0% of funds advanced), United States Treasury bills, federal agency discount notes, and commercial paper.

SOUTH CAROLINA FIRST STEPS TO SCHOOL READINESS  
NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS  
FOR THE YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2021

**1. Summary of Significant Accounting Policies (continued)**

**B. Basis of Presentation, Measurement Focus and Basis of Accounting (continued)**

**Investment Holdings and Basis (continued)**

The Office further preserves principal by investing in only the highest investment grade securities. In order to diversify investment holdings, asset allocation policies are utilized for investments having more than one year to maturity. Overall credit exposure is managed by asset allocation policies and by additional constraints controlling risk exposure to individual corporate issuers. Substantially all of the State's investments are presented at fair value; securities are valued at the last reported sales price as provided by an independent pricing service.

More information pertaining to the carrying amounts, fair value, credit and other risks of the cash management pool that First Steps participates in as required under GASB Statement No. 40, *Deposits and Investments – Risk Disclosures* and GASB Statement No. 72, *Fair Value Measurement and Application*, are disclosed in the Comprehensive Annual Financial Report of the State of South Carolina.

**Grants Receivable**

Amounts reported as grants receivable represent reimbursements due under federal or state grant agreements. First Steps expects all balances to be paid and therefore no allowance for doubtful accounts has been recorded. These amounts will be collected during the fiscal year ending June 30, 2022.

**Capital Assets**

First Steps reports its capital assets in the governmental activities in the government-wide financial statements.

First Steps' capital assets are valued at historical cost or at estimated historical cost if actual historical cost data is not available. Donated capital assets are recorded at estimated acquisition value on the donation date. The costs of normal maintenance and repairs that do not significantly add to the value of an asset or materially extend an asset's useful life are not capitalized.

An individual asset is capitalized and reported if it has an estimated useful life of at least two years and a historical cost of more than \$5,000 for buildings, machinery, vehicles, and equipment. All land and non-depreciable land improvements are capitalized and reported, regardless of cost. Once First Steps places a depreciable capital asset in service, depreciation is recorded using the straight-line method over the following useful lives:

<u>Asset Category</u>	<u>Years</u>
Equipment and computer software	5
Vehicles	5



SOUTH CAROLINA FIRST STEPS TO SCHOOL READINESS  
NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS  
FOR THE YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2021

**1. Summary of Significant Accounting Policies (continued)**

**B. Basis of Presentation, Measurement Focus and Basis of Accounting (continued)**

**Compensated Absences**

Generally, all permanent full-time State employees and certain part-time employees scheduled to work at least one-half of First Steps' work month are entitled to accrue and carry forward at calendar year-end maximums of 180 days sick leave and 45 days annual vacation leave. Upon termination of State employment, employees are entitled to be paid for accumulated unused annual vacation leave up to the maximum, but are not entitled to any payment for unused sick leave. The compensated absences liability includes accrued annual leave earned for which the employees are entitled to paid time off or payment at termination. The entire unpaid liability for which First Steps expects to compensate employees through paid time off or cash payments, inventoried at fiscal year-end current salary costs and the cost of the salary-related benefit payments, is recorded as a liability.

**Unearned Revenue**

Unearned revenue consists of funds provided to First Steps under grant agreements for which eligible expenditures had not been made as of June 30, 2021. These amounts will be recognized as grant revenue as eligible expenditures are made by First Steps during the fiscal year ending June 30, 2022.

**Fund Balance and Net Position**

*Fund Balance*

First Steps reports fund balance in accordance with GASB Statement No. 54, *Fund Balance Reporting and Governmental Fund Type Definitions*. The objective of this statement is to enhance the usefulness of fund balance information by providing clearer fund balance classifications that can be more consistently applied and by clarifying the existing governmental fund type definitions.

The following categories of fund balance are being used in the fund level financial statement of the governmental fund:

**Nonspendable fund balance**

The nonspendable fund balance classification includes amounts that cannot be spent because they are either not in spendable form or legally or contractually required to be maintained intact. The "not in spendable form" criterion includes items that are not expected to be converted to cash, for example, inventories and prepaid amounts. It also includes the long-term amount of loans and notes receivable, as well as other assets. As of June 30, 2021, First Steps did not report any nonspendable fund balance.

SOUTH CAROLINA FIRST STEPS TO SCHOOL READINESS  
NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS  
FOR THE YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2021

**1. Summary of Significant Accounting Policies (continued)**

**B. Basis of Presentation, Measurement Focus and Basis of Accounting (continued)**

**Fund Balance and Net Position (continued)**

*Fund Balance (continued)*

Restricted fund balance

The restricted fund balance classification includes amounts that are either restricted externally by creditors, grantors, contributors, or laws or regulations of other governments or restricted by law through constitutional provisions or enabling legislation. As of June 30, 2021, First Steps' restricted fund balance consisted of state appropriations restricted for the 4K pre-school program and early childhood services. Of the amount restricted, \$479,090 has been contractually obligated to partially fund the construction of two 4K program facilities as discussed in note 11.

Committed fund balance

The committed fund balance classification includes amounts that can only be used for specific purposes pursuant to constraints imposed by formal action of First Steps' highest level of decision-making authority. Those committed amounts cannot be used for any other purpose unless First Steps removes or changes the specified use by taking the same type of action it employed to previously commit those amounts. Committed fund balances also incorporate contractual obligations to the extent that existing resources in the fund have been specifically committed for use in satisfying those contractual requirements. As of June 30, 2021, First Steps reported \$692,893 of committed fund balance which had been committed for cash reserve revolving loans and grants for the county partnerships.

Assigned fund balance

The assigned fund balance classification includes amounts that are constrained by First Steps' intent to be used for specific purposes but are not restricted or committed. The authority for making an assignment is not required to be First Steps' highest level of decision-making authority and as such, the nature of the actions necessary to remove or modify an assignment does not require First Steps' highest level of authority. As of June 30, 2021, First Steps did not have any assigned fund balance.

Unassigned fund balance

The unassigned fund balance classification includes amounts that have not been assigned to other funds and has not been restricted, committed, or assigned for specific purposes within the General Fund.

Based on First Steps' policies regarding fund balance classifications as noted above, First Steps considers amounts that are restricted, committed, or assigned to be spent when the corresponding expenditure that has been designated by the State or donors has been made. After these fund balances have been depleted, unassigned fund balance will be considered to have been spent.

SOUTH CAROLINA FIRST STEPS TO SCHOOL READINESS  
NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS  
FOR THE YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2021

**1. Summary of Significant Accounting Policies (continued)**

**B. Basis of Presentation, Measurement Focus and Basis of Accounting (continued)**

**Fund Balance and Net Position (continued)**

*Net Position*

First Steps reports net position in accordance with GASB Statement No. 63, *Financial Reporting of Deferred Outflows of Resources, Deferred Inflows of Resources, and Net Position*.

The following categories of net position are used in the Statement of Net Position:

Restricted net position

Restricted net position consists of assets with constraints placed on the use either by external groups such as creditors, grantors, contributors, or laws or regulations of other governments; or law through constitutional provisions or enabling legislation. In all cases, if individual restricted net position categories are negative, the negative balance is eliminated and reclassified against unrestricted net position. As of June 30, 2021, First Steps' restricted net position consisted of state appropriations restricted for the 4K program and early childhood services.

Investment in Capital Assets

The investment in capital assets component of net position consists of capital assets, net of accumulated depreciation, reduced by any outstanding balances of bonds, mortgages, notes, or other borrowings that are attributable to the acquisition, construction, or improvement of those assets.

Unrestricted Net Position

The unrestricted component of net position is the net amount of assets, deferred outflows of resources, liabilities, and deferred inflows of resources that are not included in the determination of investment in capital assets or the restricted component of net position.

First Steps' policy is to first apply restricted resources when an expense is incurred for purposes for which both restricted and unrestricted net position are available.

**2. Budget Policy**

First Steps is granted an annual appropriation for operating purposes by the South Carolina General Assembly. The appropriation as enacted becomes the legal operating budget for First Steps' general fund. The Private 4K special revenue fund does not have a legally adopted budget. The Appropriation Act authorizes expenditures from funds appropriated from the General Fund of the State and authorizes expenditures of total funds. The "Total Funds" column in the Appropriation Act for each individual budgetary unit authorizes expenditures from all budgeted resources. A revenue budget is not adopted for individual budgetary funds. Budgetary control is maintained at the line-item level of the budgetary entity. Agencies may process disbursement vouchers in the State's budgetary accounting system only if enough cash and appropriation authorization exist.

SOUTH CAROLINA FIRST STEPS TO SCHOOL READINESS  
NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS  
FOR THE YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2021

**2. Budget Policy (continued)**

Transfers of funds may be approved by the State Fiscal Accountability Authority, previously known as the State Budget and Control Board, under its authority or by the agency as set forth in Appropriation Act Proviso 117.9 as follows: Agencies and institutions shall be authorized to transfer appropriations within programs and within the agency with notification to the Executive Budget Office. No such transfer may exceed twenty percent of the program budget. Upon request, details of such transfers may be provided to members of the General Assembly on an agency by agency basis. Transfers of appropriations from personal service accounts to other operating accounts or from other operating accounts to personal service accounts may be restricted to any established standard levels set by the State Fiscal Accountability Authority upon formal approval by a majority of the members of the State Fiscal Accountability Authority.

During the fiscal year-end closeout period in July, agencies may continue to charge vendor, interagency, and interfund payments for the fiscal year to that fiscal year's appropriations. Any unexpended State General Fund monies as of June 30 automatically lapse to the General Fund of the State on July 1 unless authorization is received from the General Assembly to carry over the funds to the ensuing fiscal year. First Steps has legislative approval to carryforward all unexpended General Fund appropriations. State law does not require the use of encumbrance accounting.

**3. Deposits and Investments**

By law, all deposits and investments are under the control of the South Carolina State Treasurer's Office (the "Office") except for those that, by specific authority, are under the control of other agencies or component units. The deposit and investment policies of those entities may differ from those of the Office. Typically, these agencies follow the deposit and investment policies of the Office in an effort to minimize deposit and investment risks.

The balances held by First Steps presented in these financial statements act as a demand deposit account with the Office and are therefore treated as cash and cash equivalents. The disclosures under GASB Statement No. 40, *Deposit and Investment Risk Disclosures* and GASB Statement No. 72, *Fair Value Measurement and Application*, are not required for cash and cash equivalents. However, as the First Steps deposits are generally invested in the State of South Carolina investment pool, information can be obtained from the State of South Carolina Comprehensive Annual Financial Report which can be found at [www.cg.sc.gov](http://www.cg.sc.gov).

SOUTH CAROLINA FIRST STEPS TO SCHOOL READINESS  
NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS  
FOR THE YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2021

**4. Capital Assets**

Capital asset activity for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2021, for the primary government was as follows:

	Beginning Balance <u>July 1, 2020</u>	<u>Additions</u>	<u>Disposals</u>	Ending Balance <u>June 30, 2021</u>
<b>Governmental activities</b>				
Capital assets being depreciated:				
Equipment and computer software	\$ 6,010	\$ —	\$ —	\$ 6,010
Vehicles	118,725	—	—	118,725
	<u>124,735</u>	<u>—</u>	<u>—</u>	<u>124,735</u>
Less accumulated depreciation for:				
Equipment and computer software	(6,010)	—	—	(6,010)
Vehicles	(73,214)	(23,745)	—	(96,959)
	<u>(79,224)</u>	<u>(23,745)</u>	<u>—</u>	<u>(102,969)</u>
Capital assets for governmental activities, net	<u>\$ 45,511</u>	<u>\$ (23,745)</u>	<u>\$ —</u>	<u>\$ 21,766</u>

Depreciation expense for the year ended June 30, 2021 was \$23,745.

**5. Long-term Liabilities**

Long-term liabilities consist of compensated absences. Compensated absence activity for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2021, for the primary government was as follows:

	Beginning Balance <u>July 1, 2020</u>	<u>Increases</u>	<u>Decreases</u>	Ending Balance <u>June 30, 2021</u>	Current Portion
Compensated absences	\$ 257,168	\$ 266,729	\$ (217,182)	\$ 306,715	\$ 162,502
Total	<u>\$ 257,168</u>	<u>\$ 266,729</u>	<u>\$ (217,182)</u>	<u>\$ 306,715</u>	<u>\$ 162,502</u>

SOUTH CAROLINA FIRST STEPS TO SCHOOL READINESS  
NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS  
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**6. Pension Plan**

The South Carolina Public Employee Benefit Authority (PEBA), created July 1, 2012, is the state agency responsible for the administration and management of the various Retirement Systems and retirement programs of the state of South Carolina, including the State Optional Retirement Program and the S.C. Deferred Compensation Program, as well as the state's employee insurance programs. As such, PEBA is responsible for administering the South Carolina Retirement Systems' five defined benefit pension plans. PEBA has an 11-member Board of Directors, appointed by the Governor and General Assembly leadership, which serves as custodian, co-trustee and co-fiduciary of the Systems and the assets of the retirement trust funds. The Retirement System Investment Commission (Commission as the governing body, RSIC as the agency), created by the General Assembly in 2005, has exclusive authority to invest and manage the retirement trust funds' assets. The Commission, an eight-member board, serves as co-trustee and co-fiduciary for the assets of the retirement trust funds. By law, the State Fiscal Accountability Authority (SFAA), which consists of five elected officials, also reviews certain PEBA Board decisions regarding the actuary of the Systems.

For purposes of measuring the net pension liability, deferred outflows and inflows of resources related to pensions, and pension expense, information about the fiduciary net position of the Systems and additions to/deductions from the Systems fiduciary net position have been determined on the accrual basis of accounting as they are reported by the Systems in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP). For this purpose, revenues are recognized when earned and expenses are recognized when incurred. Benefit and refund expenses are recognized when due and payable in accordance with the terms of the plan. Investments are reported at fair value.

PEBA issues a Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (Annual Report) containing financial statements and required supplementary information for the Systems' Pension Trust Funds. The Annual Report is publicly available through the Retirement Benefits' link on PEBA's website at [www.peba.sc.gov](http://www.peba.sc.gov), or a copy may be obtained by submitting a request to PEBA, 202 Arbor Lake Drive, Columbia, SC 29223. PEBA is considered a division of the primary government of the state of South Carolina and therefore, retirement trust fund financial information is also included in the comprehensive annual financial report of the state.

**Plan Descriptions**

- The South Carolina Retirement System (SCRS), a cost-sharing multiple-employer defined benefit pension plan, was established July 1, 1945, pursuant to the provisions of Section 9-1-20 of the South Carolina Code of Laws for the purpose of providing retirement and other benefits for teachers and employees of the state and its political subdivisions. SCRS covers employees of state agencies, public school districts, higher education institutions, other participating local subdivisions of government and individuals newly elected to the South Carolina General Assembly at or after the 2012 general election.

SOUTH CAROLINA FIRST STEPS TO SCHOOL READINESS  
NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS  
FOR THE YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2021

**6. Pension Plan (continued)**

**Plan Descriptions (continued)**

- The State Optional Retirement Program (State ORP) is a defined contribution plan that is offered as an alternative to SCRS to certain newly hired employees of state agencies, institutions of higher education, public school districts and individuals first elected to the S.C. General Assembly at or after the general election in November 2012. State ORP participants direct the investment of their funds into an account administered by one of four third party service providers. PEBA assumes no liability for State ORP benefits. Rather, the benefits are the liability of the four third party service providers. For this reason, State ORP assets are not part of the retirement systems' trust funds for financial statement purposes.

*Membership*

Membership requirements are prescribed in Title 9 of the South Carolina Code of Laws. A brief summary of the requirements under each system is presented below.

- SCRS - Generally, all employees of covered employers are required to participate in and contribute to the system as a condition of employment. This plan covers general employees and teachers and individuals newly elected to the South Carolina General Assembly beginning with the November 2012 general election. An employee member of the system with an effective date of membership prior to July 1, 2012, is a Class Two member. An employee member of the system with an effective date of membership on or after July 1, 2012, is a Class Three member.
- State ORP - As an alternative to membership in SCRS, certain newly hired state, public school, and higher education employees and individuals first elected to the S.C. General Assembly at or after the November 2012 general election have the option to participate in the State ORP. Contributions to the State ORP are at the same rates as SCRS. A direct remittance is required from the employer to the member's account with the ORP service provider for the employee contribution and a portion of the employer contribution (5 percent). A direct remittance is also required to SCRS for the remaining portion of the employer contribution and an incidental death benefit contribution, if applicable, which is retained by SCRS.

*Benefits*

Benefit terms are prescribed in Title 9 of the South Carolina Code of Laws. PEBA does not have the authority to establish or amend benefit terms without a legislative change in the code of laws. Key elements of the benefit calculation include the benefit multiplier, years of service, and average final compensation/current annual salary. A brief summary of the benefit terms for each system is presented below.

SOUTH CAROLINA FIRST STEPS TO SCHOOL READINESS  
NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS  
FOR THE YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2021

**6. Pension Plan (continued)**

**Plan Descriptions (continued)**

*Benefits (continued)*

- SCRS - A Class Two member who has separated from service with at least five or more years of earned service is eligible for a monthly pension at age 65 or with 28 years credited service regardless of age. A member may elect early retirement with reduced pension benefits payable at age 55 with 25 years of service credit. A Class Three member who has separated from service with at least eight or more years of earned service is eligible for a monthly pension upon satisfying the Rule of 90 requirement that the total of the member's age and the member's creditable service equals at least 90 years. Both Class Two and Class Three members are eligible to receive a reduced deferred annuity at age 60 if they satisfy the five- or eight-year earned service requirement, respectively. An incidental death benefit is also available to beneficiaries of active and retired members of employers who participate in the death benefit program.

The annual retirement allowance of eligible retirees or their surviving annuitants is increased by the lesser of one percent or five hundred dollars every July 1. Only those annuitants in receipt of a benefit on July 1 of the preceding year are eligible to receive the increase. Members who retire under the early retirement provisions at age 55 with 25 years of service are not eligible for the benefit adjustment until the second July 1 after reaching age 60 or the second July 1 after the date they would have had 28 years of service credit had they not retired.

*Contributions*

Actuarial valuations are performed annually by an external consulting actuary to ensure applicable contribution rates satisfy the funding parameters specified in Title 9 of the South Carolina Code of Laws. Under these provisions, SCRS and PORS contribution requirements must be sufficient to maintain an amortization period for the financing of the unfunded actuarial accrued liability (UAAL) over a period that does not exceed the number of years scheduled in state statute. Legislation in 2017 increased, but also established a ceiling for SCRS and PORS employee contribution rates. Effective July 1, 2017, employee rates were increased to a capped rate of 9.00 percent for SCRS and 9.75 percent for PORS. The legislation also increased employer contribution rates beginning July 1, 2017 for both SCRS and PORS by two percentage points and further scheduled employer contribution rates to increase by a minimum of one percentage point each year through July 1, 2022. However, the General Assembly postponed the one percent increase in the SCRS contribution rates that was scheduled to go into effect beginning July 1, 2020. If the scheduled contributions are not sufficient to meet the funding periods set in state statute, the board shall increase the employer contribution rates as necessary to meet the funding periods set for the applicable year. The maximum funding period of SCRS and PORS is scheduled to be reduced over a ten-year schedule from 30 years beginning fiscal year 2018 to 20 years by fiscal year 2028.



SOUTH CAROLINA FIRST STEPS TO SCHOOL READINESS  
NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS  
FOR THE YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2021

**6. Pension Plan (continued)**

**Plan Descriptions (continued)**

*Contributions (continued)*

Additionally, the Board is prohibited from decreasing the SCRS and PORS contribution rates until the funded ratio is at least 85 percent. If the most recent annual actuarial valuation of the Systems for funding purposes shows a ratio of the actuarial value of system assets to the actuarial accrued liability of the system (the funded ratio) that is equal to or greater than 85 percent, then the board, effective on the following July first, may decrease the then current contribution rates upon making a finding that the decrease will not result in a funded ratio of less than 85 percent. If contribution rates are decreased pursuant to this provision, and the most recent annual actuarial valuation of the system shows a funded ratio of less than 85 percent, then effective on the following July first, and annually thereafter as necessary, the board shall increase the then current contribution rates until a subsequent annual actuarial valuation of the system shows a funded ratio that is equal to or greater than 85 percent.

Required employee contribution rates<sup>1</sup> are as follows:

	<u>Fiscal Year 2021</u>	<u>Fiscal Year 2020</u>
<b>SCRS</b>		
Employee Class Two	9.00%	9.00%
Employee Class Three	9.00%	9.00%
<b>State ORP</b>		
Employee	9.00%	9.00%

Required employer contribution rates<sup>1</sup> are as follows:

	<u>Fiscal Year 2021</u>	<u>Fiscal Year 2020</u>
<b>SCRS</b>		
Employer Class Two	15.41%	15.41%
Employer Class Three	15.41%	15.41%
Employer Incidental Death Benefit	0.15%	0.15%
<b>State ORP</b>		
Employer Contribution <sup>2</sup>	15.41%	15.41%
Employer Incidental Death Benefit	0.15%	0.15%

<sup>1</sup> Calculated on earnable compensation as defined in Title 9 of the South Carolina Code of laws.

<sup>2</sup> Of this employer contribution, 5% of earnable compensation must be remitted by the employer directly to the ORP vendor to be allocated to the member's account with the remainder of the employer contribution remitted to the SCRS.

SOUTH CAROLINA FIRST STEPS TO SCHOOL READINESS  
NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS  
FOR THE YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2021

**6. Pension Plan (continued)**

**Actuarial Assumptions and Methods**

Actuarial valuations of the plan involve estimates of the reported amounts and assumptions about the probability of occurrence of events far into the future. Examples include assumptions about future employment, mortality, and future salary increases. Amounts determined regarding the net pension liability are subject to continual revision as actual results are compared with past expectations and new estimates are made about the future. South Carolina state statute requires that an actuarial experience study be completed at least once in each five-year period. An experience report on the Systems was most recently issued for the period ending June 30, 2019 for first use in the July 1, 2021 actuarial valuation.

The June 30, 2020, total pension liability (TPL), net pension liability (NPL), and sensitivity information shown in this report were determined by our consulting actuary, Gabriel, Roeder, Smith and Company (GRS) and are based on an actuarial valuation performed as of July 1, 2019. The total pension liability was rolled-forward from the valuation date to the plans' fiscal year end, June 30, 2020, using generally accepted actuarial principles.

The following table provides a summary of the actuarial assumptions and methods used to calculate the TPL as of June 30, 2020.

	<b>SCRS</b>
Actuarial cost method	Entry age normal
Investment rate of return <sup>1</sup>	7.25%
Projected salary increases <sup>1</sup>	3.0% to 12.5% (varies by service)
Benefit adjustments	lesser of 1% or \$500 annually
<sup>1</sup> Includes inflation at 2.25%	

The post-retiree mortality assumption is dependent upon the member's job category and gender. The base mortality assumptions, the 2016 Public Retirees of South Carolina Mortality table (2016 PRSC), was developed using the Systems' mortality experience. These base rates are adjusted for future improvement in mortality using published Scale AA projected from the year 2016.

Assumptions used in the determination of the June 30, 2020, TPL are as follows.

<b>Former Job Class</b>	<b>Males</b>	<b>Females</b>
Educators	2016 PRSC Males multiplied by 92%	2016 PRSC Females multiplied by 98%
General Employees and Members of the General Assembly	2016 PRSC Males multiplied by 100%	2016 PRSC Females multiplied by 111%
Public Safety and Firefighters	2016 PRSC Males multiplied by 125%	2016 PRSC Females multiplied by 111%

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**6. Pension Plan (continued)**

**Net Pension Liability**

The NPL is calculated separately for each system and represents that particular system's TPL determined in accordance with GASB No. 67 less that System's fiduciary net position. NPL totals, as of June 30, 2020, for SCRS is presented below.

<b>System</b>	<b>Total Pension Liability</b>	<b>Plan Fiduciary Net Position</b>	<b>Employers' Net Pension Liability</b>	<b>Plan Fiduciary Net Position as a Percentage of the Total Pension Liability</b>
SCRS	\$ 51,844,187,763	\$ 26,292,418,682	\$ 25,551,769,081	50.7%

The TPL is calculated by the Systems' actuary, and each plan's fiduciary net position is reported in the Systems' financial statements. The NPL is disclosed in accordance with the requirements of GASB 67 in the Systems' notes to the financial statements and required supplementary information. Liability calculations performed by the Systems' actuary for the purpose of satisfying the requirements of GASB Nos. 67 and 68 are not applicable for other purposes, such as determining the plans' funding requirements.

First Steps' proportionate share of the net pension liability was calculated on the basis of historical employer contributions. Although GASB 68 encourages the use of the employer's projected long-term contribution effort to the retirement plan, allocating on the basis of historical employer contributions is considered acceptable. For the year ending June 30, 2020, First Steps' percentage of the SCRS net pension liability was 0.02409%. For the year ending June 30, 2021, First Steps' percentage of the SCRS net pension liability was 0.02563%. First Steps' proportionate share is determined by its percentage of total contributions to SCRS during the respective fiscal year. The change in percentage resulted in First Steps' recognizing a change in its proportionate share of the SCRS net pension liability at related deferred outflows and inflows of resources.

*Discount Rate*

The discount rate used to measure the TPL was 7.25 percent. The projection of cash flows used to determine the discount rate assumed that contributions from participating employers in SCRS and PORS will be made based on the actuarially determined rates based on provisions in the South Carolina Code of Laws. Based on those assumptions, the System's fiduciary net position was projected to be available to make all the projected future benefit payments of current plan members. Therefore, the long-term expected rate of return on pension plan investments was applied to all periods of projected benefit payments to determine the TPL.

*Long-term Expected Rate of Return*

The long-term expected rate of return on pension plan investments is based upon 20-year capital market assumptions. The long-term expected rates of return represent assumptions developed using an arithmetic building block approach primarily based on consensus expectations and market-based inputs. Expected returns are net of investment fees.

SOUTH CAROLINA FIRST STEPS TO SCHOOL READINESS  
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**6. Pension Plan (continued)**

**Net Pension Liability (continued)**

*Long-term Expected Rate of Return (continued)*

The expected returns, along with the expected inflation rate, form the basis for the target asset allocation adopted at the beginning of the 2020 fiscal year. The long-term expected rate of return is produced by weighting the expected future real rates of return by the target allocation percentage and adding expected inflation and is summarized in the table below. For actuarial purposes, the 7.25 percent assumed annual investment rate of return used in the calculation of the TPL includes a 5.00 percent real rate of return and a 2.25 percent inflation component.

<u>Asset Class</u>	<u>Target Asset Allocation</u>	<u>Expected Arithmetic Real Rate of Return</u>	<u>Long Term Expected Portfolio Real Rate of Return</u>
<b>Global Equity</b>	<b>51.0%</b>		
Global Public Equity <sup>1,2</sup>	35.0%	7.81%	2.73%
Private Equity <sup>2,3</sup>	9.0%	8.91%	0.80%
Equity Options Strategies <sup>1</sup>	7.0%	5.09%	0.36%
<b>Real Assets</b>	<b>12.0%</b>		
Real Estate (Private) <sup>2,3</sup>	8.0%	5.55%	0.44%
Real Estate (REITs) <sup>2</sup>	1.0%	7.78%	0.08%
Infrastructure (Private) <sup>2,3</sup>	2.0%	4.88%	0.10%
Infrastructure (Public) <sup>2</sup>	1.0%	7.05%	0.07%
<b>Opportunistic</b>	<b>8.0%</b>		
Global Tactical Asset Allocation <sup>1</sup>	7.0%	3.56%	0.25%
Other Opportunistic Strategies	1.0%	4.41%	0.04%
<b>Credit</b>	<b>15.0%</b>		
High Yield Bonds/ Bank Loans <sup>1,2</sup>	4.0%	4.21%	0.17%
Emerging Markets Debt	4.0%	3.44%	0.14%
Private Debt <sup>2,3</sup>	7.0%	5.79%	0.40%
<b>Rate Sensitive</b>	<b>14.0%</b>		
Core Fixed Income <sup>1</sup>	13.0%	1.60%	0.21%
Cash and Short Duration (Net)	1.0%	0.56%	0.01%
Total Expected Real Return <sup>4</sup>	<u>100.0%</u>		<u>5.80%</u>
Inflation for Actuarial			<u>2.25%</u>
Total Expected Nominal			<u>8.05%</u>

<sup>1</sup> Portable Alpha Strategies will be capped at 12% of total assets; Hedge funds (including all hedge funds used in portable alpha implementation) capped at 20% of total assets.

<sup>2</sup> The target weights to Private Equity, Private Debt, Private Infrastructure and Private Real Estate will be equal to their actual weights as of prior month end. Private Equity and Public Equity combine for 44 percent of entire portfolio. Private Debt and High Yield/Bank Loans combine for 11 percent of the entire portfolio. Private Infrastructure and Public Infrastructure combine for 3 percent of the entire portfolio. Private Real Estate and Real Estate (REITs) combine for 9 percent of entire portfolio.

<sup>3</sup> RSIC staff and Consultant will notify the Commission if Private Markets assets exceed 25% of total assets.

<sup>4</sup> The expected return for each of the Portable Alpha asset classes includes the expected return attributed to the Overlay Program. For benchmarking purposes there is a 10% weight assigned to Portable Alpha Hedge Funds in the Policy Benchmark.

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**6. Pension Plan (continued)**

*Sensitivity Analysis*

The following table presents the collective net pension liability of the participating employers calculated using the discount rate of 7.25 percent, as well as what the employers' net pension liability would be if it were calculated using a discount rate that is 1.00 percent lower (6.25 percent) or 1.00 percent higher (8.25 percent) than the current rate.

<b>Sensitivity of the Proportional Share of Net Pension Liability to Changes in the Discount Rate</b>			
<b>System</b>	<b>1.00% Decrease (6.25%)</b>	<b>Current Discount Rate (7.25%)</b>	<b>1.00% Increase (8.25%)</b>
SCRS	\$ 8,115,726	\$ 6,548,225	\$ 5,239,349

**Deferred Outflows (Inflows) of Resources**

For the year ended June 30, 2021, First Steps recognized pension expense of \$52,820 which is included in employer fringe benefits in the accompanying financial statements. At June 30, 2021, the First Steps reported deferred outflows (inflows) of resources related to pensions from the following sources and will be amortized to pension expense as noted in following schedules. Average remaining service lives of all employees provided with pensions through the pension plans at June 30, 2020 was 3.984 years for SCRS:

	<u>Deferred Outflows of Resources</u>	<u>Deferred Inflows of Resources</u>
Pension contributions subsequent to measurement date	\$ 487,385	\$ —
Differences in actual and expected plan experience	75,558	24,762
Change in proportionate share and differences between First Steps' contributions and proportionate share of contributions	297,783	1,820,915
Changes in assumptions	8,023	—
Net differences between projected and actual earnings on plan investments	481,677	—
	<u>\$ 1,350,426</u>	<u>\$ 1,845,677</u>

<b>Measurement Period Ending June 30,</b>	<b>Fiscal Year Ending June 30,</b>	<b>SCRS</b>
2021	2022	\$ (1,117,386)
2022	2023	(230,299)
2023	2024	242,135
2024	2025	122,914

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**6. Pension Plan (continued)**

**Deferred Outflows (Inflows) of Resources (continued)**

First Steps reported \$487,385 as deferred outflows of resources related to contributions subsequent to the measurement date which will be recognized as a reduction of the net pension liability in the year ended June 30, 2022.

**7. Post-Employment Benefits Other than Pensions**

PEBA is a state agency responsible for the administration and management of the state's employee insurance programs, other post-employment benefits trusts. By law, the SFFA, which consists of five elected officials, also reviews certain PEBA Board decisions in administering the State Health Plan and other post-employment benefits (OPEB). See Note 6 for more details on PEBA and the SFAA.

PEBA, Insurance Benefits issues audited financial statements and required supplementary information for the OPEB Trust Fund. This information is publicly available through the Insurance Benefits' link on PEBA's website at [www.peba.sc.gov](http://www.peba.sc.gov) or a copy may be obtained by submitting a request to PEBA – Insurance Benefits, 202 Arbor Lake Drive, Columbia, SC 29223. PEBA is considered a division of the primary government of the state of South Carolina and therefore, OPEB Trust fund financial information is also included in the comprehensive annual financial report of the state.

*Plan Descriptions*

The Other Post-Employment Benefits Trust Fund (OPEB Trust), refers to the South Carolina Retiree Health Insurance Trust Fund (SCRHITF) established by the State of South Carolina as Act 195, which became effective on May 2008. The SCRHITF was created to fund and account for the employer costs of the State's retiree health and dental plans.

In accordance with Act 195, the OPEB Trust is administered by the PEBA, Insurance Benefits and the State Treasurer is the custodian of the funds held in trust. The Board of Directors of PEBA has been designated as the Trustee.

The OPEB Trust is a cost-sharing multiple-employer defined benefit plan. Article 5 of the State Code of Laws defines the plan and authorizes the Trustee to at any time adjust the plan, including its benefits and contributions, as necessary to insure the fiscal stability of the plan. In accordance with the South Carolina Code of Laws and the annual Appropriations Act, the State provides post-employment health and dental benefits to retired State and school district employees and their covered dependents.

*Benefits*

The SCRHITF is a healthcare plan that covers retired employees of the State of South Carolina, including all agencies, and public school districts. The SCRHITF provides health and dental insurance benefits to eligible retirees. Generally, retirees are eligible for the health and dental benefits if they have established at least ten years of retirement service credit. For new hires beginning employment May 2, 2008 and after, retirees are eligible for benefits if they have established 25 years of service for 100% employer funding and 15-24 years of service for 50% employer funding.

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**7. Post-Employment Benefits Other than Pensions (continued)**

*Contributions and Funding Policies*

Section 1-11-710 of the South Carolina Code of Laws of 1976, as amended, requires the postemployment and long-term disability benefits to be funded through non-employer and employer contributions for active employees and retirees to the PEBA – Insurance Benefits. Non-employer contributions consist of an annual appropriation by the General Assembly and the statutorily required transfer from PEBA – Insurance Benefits reserves.

The SCRHITF is funded through participating employers that are mandated by State statute to contribute at a rate assessed each year by the Department of Administration Executive Budget Office on active employee covered payroll. The covered payroll surcharge for the year ended June 30, 2021 was 6.25 percent. The South Carolina Retirement System collects the monthly covered payroll surcharge for all participating employers and remits it directly to the SCRHITF. Other sources of funding for the SCRHITF also include the implicit subsidy, or age-related subsidy inherent in the healthcare premiums structure. The implicit subsidy represents a portion of the health care expenditures paid on behalf of the employer's active employees. For purposes of GASB Statement No. 75, this expenditure on behalf of the active employee is reclassified as a retiree health care expenditure so that the employer's contributions towards the plan reflect the underlying age-adjusted, retiree benefit costs. Non-employer contributions include the mandatory transfer of accumulated PEBA – Insurance Benefits' reserves and the annual appropriation budgeted by the General Assembly. It is also funded through investment income.

For purposes of measuring the net OPEB liability, deferred outflows and inflows of resources related to OPEB, and OPEB expense, information about the fiduciary net position of the OPEB Trusts, and additions to and deductions from the OPEB Trusts fiduciary net position have been determined on the same basis as they were reported by the OPEB Trusts. For this purpose, revenues are recognized when earned and expenses are recognized when incurred. Therefore, benefit and administrative expenses are recognized when due and payable. Investments are reported at fair value.

**Actuarial Assumptions and Methods**

Actuarial valuations of an ongoing plan involve estimates of the value of reported amounts and assumptions about the probability of occurrence of events far into the future. Examples include assumptions about future employment, mortality, and the healthcare cost trend. Actuarially determined amounts are subject to continual revision as actual results are compared with past expectations and new estimates are made about the future.

Projections of benefits for financial reporting purposes are based on the substantive plans (as understood by the employer and plan participants) and include the types of benefits provided at the time the valuation and the historical pattern of sharing of benefit costs between the employer and plan members to that point.

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**7. Post-Employment Benefits Other than Pensions (continued)**

**Actuarial Assumptions and Methods (continued)**

Additional information as of the latest actuarial valuation for SCRHITF:

<b>Valuation Date:</b>	June 30, 2019
<b>Actuarial Cost Method:</b>	Entry Age Normal
<b>Inflation:</b>	2.25%
<b>Investment Rate of Return:</b>	2.75%, net of OPEB Plan investment expense; including inflation
<b>Single Discount Rate:</b>	2.45% as of June 30, 2020
<b>Demographic Assumptions:</b>	Based on the experience study performed for the South Carolina Retirement Systems for the 5-year period ending June 30, 2015
<b>Mortality:</b>	For healthy retirees, the 2016 Public Retirees of South Carolina Mortality Table for Males and the 2016 Public Retirees of South Carolina Mortality Table for Females are used with fully generational mortality projections based on Scale AA from the year 2016. Multipliers are applied to the base tables based on gender and employment type.
<b>Health Care Trend Rate:</b>	Initial trend starting at 6.40% and gradually decreasing to an ultimate trend rate of 4.00% over a period of 15 years
<b>Retiree Participation:</b>	79% for retirees who are eligible for funded premiums 59% participation for retirees who are eligible for Partial Funded Premiums 20% participation for retirees who are eligible for Non-Funded Premiums
<b>Notes:</b>	The discount rate changed from 3.13% as of June 30, 2019 to 2.45% as of June 30, 2020; updates were also made to the healthcare trend rate assumption, including an adjustment to reflect the repeal of the "Cadillac Tax".

**Roll Forward Disclosures**

The actuarial valuation was performed as of June 30, 2019. Update procedures were used to roll forward the total OPEB liability to June 30, 2020.

**Net OPEB Liability**

The Net OPEB Liability (NOL) is calculated separately for each OPEB Trust Fund and represents that particular Trust's Total OPEB Liability (TOL) determined in accordance with GASB No. 74 less that Trust's fiduciary net position. The allocation of each employer's proportionate share of the collective Net OPEB Liability and collective OPEB Expense was determined using the employer's payroll-related contributions over the measurement period.

The following table represents the components of the net OPEB liability as of June 30, 2020:

OPEB Trust	Total OPEB Liability	Plan Fiduciary Net Position	Net OPEB Liability	Plan Fiduciary Net Position as a % of Total OPEB Liability
SCRHITF	\$ 19,703,745,672	\$ 1,652,299,185	\$ 18,051,446,487	8.39%



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**7. Post-Employment Benefits Other than Pensions (continued)**

**Net OPEB Liability (continued)**

The TOL is calculated by the Trusts' actuary, and each Trust's fiduciary net position is reported in the Trust's financial statements. The NOL is disclosed in accordance with the requirements of GASB No. 74 in the Trusts' notes to the financial statements and required supplementary information. Liability calculations performed by the Trusts' actuary for the purpose of satisfying the requirements of GASB Nos. 74 and 75 and are not applicable for other purposes, such as determining the Trusts' funding requirements.

At June 30, 2021, First Steps reported a liability of \$5,336,555 for its proportionate share of the net OPEB liability. The net OPEB liability was measured as of June 30, 2020, and the total OPEB liability used to calculate the net OPEB liability was determined by an actuarial valuation as of June 30, 2019 and rolled forward to June 30, 2020. First Steps' proportion of the net OPEB liability was based on a projection of First Steps' long-term share of contributions to the OPEB plan relative to the projected contributions of all participating entities, actuarially determined. At June 30, 2021 and 2020, First Steps' proportion was 0.029563% and 0.027578%, respectively.

*Single Discount Rate*

The Single Discount Rate of 2.45% was used to measure the total OPEB liability for the SCRHITF. The accounting policy for this plan is to set the Single Discount Rate equal to the prevailing municipal bond rate. Due to the plan's investment and funding policies, the difference between a blended discount rate and the municipal bond rate would be less than several basis points (several hundredths of one percent).

*Long-term Expected Rate of Return*

The long-term expected rate of return represents assumptions developed using an arithmetic building block approach primarily based on consensus expectations and market-based inputs. The expected returns, along with the expected inflation rate, form the basis for the target asset allocation adopted at the beginning of the 2018 fiscal year. The long-term expected rate of return is produced by weighting the expected future real rates of return by the target allocation percentage and adding expected inflation. This information is summarized in the following table:

<u>Asset Class</u>	<u>Target Asset Allocation</u>	<u>Expected Arithmetic Real Rate of Return</u>	<u>Allocation Weighted Long Term Expected Portfolio Real Rate of Return</u>
US Domestic Fixed Income	80.00%	0.60%	0.48%
Cash	20.00%	0.10%	0.07%
Total Expected Real Return	100.0%		0.55%
Expected Inflation			2.25%
Total Return			2.80%
Investment Return Assumption			2.75%

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**7. Post-Employment Benefits Other than Pensions (continued)**

**Net OPEB Liability (continued)**

*Sensitivity Analysis*

The following table presents the SCRHITF's net OPEB liability calculated using a Single Discount Rate of 2.45%, as well as what the plan's net OPEB liability would be if it were calculated using a Single Discount Rate that is one percent lower or one percent higher:

<b>Sensitivity of the Proportional Share of Net OPEB Liability to Changes in the Single Discount Rate</b>			
<b>OPEB Trust</b>	<b>1.00% Decrease (1.45%)</b>	<b>Current Discount Rate (2.45%)</b>	<b>1.00% Increase (3.45%)</b>
SCRHITF	\$ 6,367,580	\$ 5,336,555	\$ 4,512,687

Regarding the sensitivity of First Steps' proportionate share of SCRHITF's net OPEB liability to changes in the healthcare cost trend rates, the following table presents First Steps' proportionate share of the net OPEB liability, calculated using the assumed trend rates as well as what First Steps' proportionate share of the net OPEB liability would be if were calculated using a trend rate that is one percent lower or one percent higher:

<b>Sensitivity of the Proportional Share of Net OPEB Liability to Changes in the Healthcare Cost Trend Rate</b>			
<b>OPEB Trust</b>	<b>1.00% Decrease</b>	<b>Current Healthcare Cost Trend Rate</b>	<b>1.00% Increase</b>
SCRHITF	\$ 4,319,428	\$ 5,336,555	\$ 6,672,332

**OPEB Expense and Deferred Outflows and Inflows of Resources**

For the year ended June 30, 2021, First Steps recognized OPEB benefit of \$184,772. At June 30, 2021, First Steps reported deferred outflows and inflows of resources related to OPEB from the following sources:

	<b>Deferred Outflows of Resources</b>	<b>Deferred Inflows of Resources</b>
OPEB contributions subsequent to measurement date	\$ 195,768	\$ —
Differences in actual and expected plan experience	152,630	121,532
Changes in assumptions	794,146	212,529
Change in proportionate share and differences between First Steps' contributions and proportionate share of contributions	262,035	2,624,630
Net differences between projected and actual earnings on plan investments	—	12,447
	<u>\$ 1,404,579</u>	<u>\$ 2,971,138</u>

SOUTH CAROLINA FIRST STEPS TO SCHOOL READINESS  
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**7. Post-Employment Benefits Other than Pensions (continued)**

**OPEB Expense and Deferred Outflows and Inflows of Resources (continued)**

Contributions subsequent to the measurement date of \$195,768 were reported as deferred outflows of resources related to OPEB and will be recognized as a reduction of the net OPEB liability in the year ended June 30, 2022. Other amounts reported as deferred outflows and inflows of resources related to OPEB will be recognized in OPEB expense as follows. Average remaining services lives of all employees provided with OPEB through the June 30, 2020 was 7.139 years for SCRHITF:

<b>Measurement Period Ending June 30,</b>	<b>Fiscal Year Ending June 30,</b>	<b>SCRHITF</b>
2021	2022	\$ (476,143)
2022	2023	(477,863)
2023	2024	(480,589)
2024	2025	(433,304)
2025	2026	(52,708)
Thereafter		158,280

**8. Deferred Compensation Plans**

Several optional deferred compensation plans are available to State employees. The multiple-employer plans, created under Internal Revenue Code Sections 457, 401(k), and 403(b), are administered by third parties and are not included in First Steps' financial statements. Compensation deferred under the plans is placed in trust for the contributing employee. First Steps has no liability for losses under the plans. Employees may withdraw the current value of their contributions when they terminate State employment. Employees may also withdraw contributions prior to termination if they meet requirements specified by the applicable plan. First Steps made no contributions for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2021.

**9. Risk Management**

First Steps is exposed to various risks of loss including theft of, damage to, or destruction of assets, and general torts and maintains state insurance coverage for non-owned motor vehicles and general torts. First Steps did not incur any losses during the past three years.

First Steps has not transferred the risk of loss for employee theft or misappropriation of assets and the portion of the risks of loss related to insurance policy deductibles for non-owned motor vehicles and torts to a state or commercial insurer.

**10. Transactions with State Entities / Related Parties**

First Steps had significant transactions with the State and various State agencies. First Steps purchases goods and services from various State agencies. Total purchases from State agencies were approximately \$346,000 for the year ended June 30, 2021, including \$15,954 in insurance premiums described below.

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**10. Transactions with State Entities / Related Parties (continued)**

First Steps provided no material services free of charge to other State agencies during the fiscal year. First Steps participates in the statewide dual employment program. Workers' compensation and other insurance premiums for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2021 of \$15,954 were paid to the State Accident Fund.

**11. Commitments and Contingencies**

*Leases*

First Steps has entered into non-cancellable leases, considered operating leases, for a facility used to house operations critical to First Steps' mission and for equipment. Rent expense related to the facility lease was approximately \$121,000. The facility lease expired in November 2020 at which time First Steps negotiated a month-to-month extension until it was able to move to a new location subsequent to yearend. A new facility lease was executed and effective June 15, 2021 with a term of 64 months. Total lease and rental expense was \$194,674, for the year ended June 30, 2021. Future base rental payments under non-cancellable leases, inclusive of the new facility lease, are as follows:

Fiscal year ending June 30:

2022	\$ 280,278
2023	280,278
2024	280,278
2025	243,078
2026	243,078
Thereafter	81,026
Total	<u>\$ 1,408,016</u>

*Grants*

First Steps receives financial assistance from various state and local governmental agencies in the form of grants. Disbursements of funds received under these programs generally require compliance with the terms and conditions specified in the grant agreements. The disbursements are also subject to audit by the grantor agencies. Any disallowed claims resulting from such audits could become a liability. However, in the opinion of management, any such disallowed claims will not have a material effect on any of the financial statements included herein or on the overall financial position of First Steps at June 30, 2021.

*County Partnership Regional Finance Managers*

During 2018, First Steps entered into a contract with a single Regional Finance Manager for its County Partnerships. The contract has a five-year term which will expire during the fiscal year ending June 30, 2022. Remaining contractual payments are \$392,500.

SOUTH CAROLINA FIRST STEPS TO SCHOOL READINESS  
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**11. Commitments and Contingencies (continued)**

*Local Partnership Accounting Software Development*

During the year ended June 30, 2019, First Steps entered into an agreement for the development and implementation of a new accounting software for the local partnerships. The contract is for an initial three-year term with two one-year extensions, and required an initial \$125,000 expenditure for design and implementation. The contract requires annual payments of approximately \$61,000 for licensing and user rights.

*4K Program Facilities*

During the year ended June 30, 2020, First Steps entered into two separate contracts committing to the funding of a portion of the construction of two 4K program facilities. The first contract was for \$600,000 for a facility in Kershaw, South Carolina. The second was for \$300,000 for a facility in Spartanburg, South Carolina. The total commitment from First Steps is limited to the contract amount. The facilities' construction was delayed due to the COVID pandemic and scheduled completion is during the year ending June 30, 2022. First Steps has a remaining commitment of \$479,090 related to the facilities. The fund balance and net position associated with the cash held for these two contracts has been presented as restricted in both the governmental funds balance sheet and statement of net position.

*SC First Steps new Outcomes and Accountability Data System, (Knowledge, Information, and Teaming System: KITS)*

During the year ended June 30, 2021, First Steps entered into an agreement for the development and implementation of a new Data System for the Local Partnerships and the 4K Program. This system will meet the data needs for the agency for the foreseeable future. The award was given to ANLAR, a company with experience in developing data systems for early education and government entities. The solicitation was awarded for \$1,422,881, to be paid between March 11, 2021 through March 10, 2026. A large portion of the expenses are included in the Preschool Development Grant through a contract between First Steps and the South Carolina Department of Social Services ("DSS"); \$123,436 of that amount was paid during the period ending June 30, 2021.

*First Five Website*

During the year ended June 30, 2021, First Steps entered into an agreement for the development and implementation of a website that would provide a single portal for early childhood services in the State. It would connect all of the state agencies in the State that provide services for this population. The award was given on April 2, 2021 to Mad Monkey Web Supply Company Inc for an amount of \$558,000 payable between April of 2021 through April 1, 2026; \$25,000 of this was paid during the period ending on June 30, 2021. Much of the cost of development of this website and associated services is being paid for by the Preschool Development Grant through a contract between First Steps and DSS.

**South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness  
Required Supplementary Information -  
Budgetary Comparison Schedule – Budgetary General Funds  
(Non-GAAP Budgetary Basis – Unaudited)  
For the Year Ended June 30, 2021**

	<u>Budgeted Amounts</u>		<u>Actual</u>	<u>Variance Positive (Negative)</u>
	<u>Original</u>	<u>Final</u>		
Expenditures:				
First Steps to School Readiness				
Personal Services				
Classified Positions	\$ 67,621	\$ 69,348	\$ 69,348	\$ —
Special Items				
Teacher Supplies	—	130,900	—	130,900
CDEPP	6,424,200	6,424,200	6,424,200	—
Employer Contributions	<u>31,056</u>	<u>32,332</u>	<u>32,332</u>	<u>—</u>
Total First Steps to School Readiness	<u>\$ 6,522,877</u>	<u>\$ 6,656,780</u>	<u>\$ 6,525,880</u>	<u>\$ 130,900</u>

**South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness  
Required Supplementary Information -  
Budgetary Comparison Schedule – Other Budgeted Funds  
(Non-GAAP Budgetary Basis – Unaudited)  
For the Year Ended June 30, 2021**

	Budgeted Amounts		Actual	Variance Positive (Negative)
	Original	Final		
Expenditures:				
First Steps to School Readiness				
Personal Services				
Classified Positions	\$ 2,873,885	\$ 618,060	\$ 618,060	\$ —
Unclassified Positions	121,540	119,340	119,340	—
Other Personal Services	420,000	232,022	97,326	134,696
Other Operating Expenses	6,914,617	6,985,460	4,384,308	2,601,152
Special Items				
County Partnerships	14,435,228	14,898,073	14,676,403	221,670
CDEPP	9,767,864	14,998,472	8,527,237	6,471,235
Employer Contributions	986,235	787,108	756,126	30,982
Total First Steps to School Readiness	<u>\$ 35,519,369</u>	<u>\$ 38,638,535</u>	<u>\$ 29,178,800</u>	<u>\$ 9,459,735</u>

**SOUTH CAROLINA FIRST STEPS TO SCHOOL READINESS  
NOTES TO REQUIRED SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION -  
BUDGETARY COMPARISON SCHEDULES  
FOR THE YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2021**

**1. Budgetary Funds**

South Carolina's Annual Appropriation Act, the State's legally adopted budget, does not present budgets by GAAP fund. Instead, it presents program-level budgets for the following two funds:

*General Funds* – These funds are general operating funds. The resources in the funds are primarily taxes. The State expends General Funds to provide traditional State government services.

*Total Funds* – The Total Funds column in the Appropriations Act includes all budgeted resources. Amounts in this column include General Funds as well as most, but not all, federal and department-generated resources. Total funds include portions of certain proprietary and capital project fund activities as well as most special revenue activities but exclude the pension trust funds and some other fiduciary fund activities.

Amounts presented as *Other Budgeted Funds* are obtained by subtracting the General Funds column in the Appropriations Act from the Total Funds columns. Revenue is not presented in the budgetary schedule because it is budgeted at the Statewide level.

As operating conditions change, First Steps may transfer appropriations between programs and classifications within programs. However, limits are placed on increasing/decreasing authorizations for personal services without State Fiscal Accountability Authority approval. Also, a revision of budgeted amounts over and above the total revenues appropriated requires approval of the State Fiscal Accountability Authority.

Both the funds appropriated by the State and other budgeted funds are included within the General Fund for financial statement presentation under GAAP.

**2. Original and Final Budgeted Amounts; Basis of Presentation**

The original appropriations presented in the accompanying schedule for the General Funds include amounts in the Appropriations Act as well as any appropriation reductions specifically authorized by law to prevent duplicate appropriations. The terminology, classification, and format of the appropriations section of the accompanying schedules are substantively the same as for the legally adopted budget. The State allows First Steps to transfer its appropriated funds to restricted accounts to allow for the opportunity for interest to be earned on these appropriated amounts. However, expenditures have been presented in accordance with the classifications provided for in the legally adopted budget.

The State's General Assembly does not approve estimated revenue or fund balance amounts for Other Budgeted Funds which include First Steps' General Fund. However, Section 115 (*Recapitulations*) of the Appropriation Act includes net source of funds amounts (i.e. estimated cash brought forward from the previous fiscal year plus estimated revenue for the current fiscal year minus estimated cash to be carried forward to the following fiscal year) for three categories of Other Budgeted Funds: Federal, Earmarked, and Restricted. A budget versus actual comparison for First Steps' General Funds and Other Budgeted Funds are presented as required supplementary information.



**SOUTH CAROLINA FIRST STEPS TO SCHOOL READINESS  
NOTES TO REQUIRED SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION -  
BUDGETARY COMPARISON SCHEDULES  
FOR THE YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2021**

**3. Legal Level of Budgetary Control**

First Steps maintains budgetary control at the level of summary objective category of expenditure within each program of each department or agency which is the level of detail presented in the accompanying schedules.

**4. Basis of Budgeting**

Current legislation states that the General Assembly intends to appropriate all monies to operate State government for the current fiscal year. Unexpended appropriations lapse on July 31 unless the department or agency is given specific authorization to carry them forward to the next fiscal year. First Steps has such authorization to carry forward its funds. Cash-basis accounting for payroll expenditures is used, while the accrual basis is used for other expenditures.

State law does not precisely define the State's budgetary basis of budgeting. In practice, however, it is the cash basis with the following exceptions:

- Departments and agencies shall charge certain vendor and interfund payments against the preceding fiscal year's appropriations through July 14.
- All revenues are recorded only when the State receives the related cash with the exception of certain tax amounts, such as motor fuel taxes and gas taxes, which are not received by First Steps' General Funds.

**5. Budget to GAAP Reporting Differences**

Budgetary accounting principles differ significantly from GAAP accounting principles. Basis differences arise because the basis of budgeting differs from the GAAP basis used to prepare the statement of revenues, expenditures, and changes in fund balance. In the current year, there are funds that are received by First Steps that are not legally budgeted and therefore, the amounts reported as actual expenditures on the budgetary basis do not agree to the actual expenditures reported in the governmental fund Statement of Revenue, Expenditure, and Changes in Fund Balance and the Statement of Activities. The differences between the budgetary comparison schedules for the General Funds and Other Budgeted Funds as compared to the Statement of Revenues, Expenditures, and Changes in Fund Balance are related strictly to the modified accrual basis of accounting which include accounts receivable and accounts payable as revenues and expenditures in the current year while the budgetary basis would include those amounts in the year that payments were actually received or paid. A reconciliation of the budgetary basis expenditures to the GAAP basis expenditures is below:

**SOUTH CAROLINA FIRST STEPS TO SCHOOL READINESS  
NOTES TO REQUIRED SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION -  
BUDGETARY COMPARISON SCHEDULES  
FOR THE YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2021**

**5. Budget to GAAP Reporting Differences (continued)**

Reconciliation of Budget Basis to GAAP Basis Expenditures  
For the Year Ended June 30, 2021

	General Fund	Other Budgeted Funds	Total
Total expenditures, budgetary basis	\$ 6,525,880	\$ 29,178,800	\$ 35,704,680
Perspective differences:			
All expenditures are reported in the General Fund for GAAP	29,178,800	(29,178,800)	—
Basis of accounting differences:			
Change in accrued salaries	73,449	—	73,449
Change in accounts payable	(51,398)	—	(51,398)
Amounts grossed up for GAAP basis that represent a transfer of appropriations on the budgetary basis	2,805,000	—	2,805,000
Revenues in the special revenue fund are considered expenditures in the General Fund for budgetary purposes	(15,090,838)	—	(15,090,838)
Other basis differences	87,010	—	87,010
Total expenditures, GAAP basis	\$ 23,527,903	\$ —	\$ 23,527,903

**South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness  
Required Supplementary Information -  
Schedule of the South Carolina First Steps  
to School Readiness' Proportionate Share of the Net  
Pension Liability – South Carolina Retirement System  
As of June 30, 2021  
Last Eight Fiscal Years**

	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017
First Steps' proportion of the net pension liability	0.02563%	0.02409%	0.03153%	0.050291%	0.038504%
First Steps' proportionate share of the net pension liability	\$ 6,548,225	\$ 5,500,745	\$ 7,063,997	\$ 11,321,231	\$ 8,224,476
First Steps' covered payroll	\$ 2,725,077	\$ 2,411,951	\$ 3,039,003	\$ 5,074,161	\$ 3,728,634
First Steps' proportionate share of the net pension liability as percentage of covered payroll	240.30%	228.06%	232.44%	223.12%	220.58%
Plan fiduciary net position as a percentage of the total pension liability	50.7%	54.4%	54.1%	53.3%	52.9%
First Steps' proportion of the net pension liability	0.031435%	0.031390%	0.031390%		
First Steps' proportionate share of the net pension liability	\$ 5,961,706	\$ 5,404,384	\$ 5,630,315		
First Steps' covered payroll	\$ 2,947,293	\$ 2,849,840	\$ 2,889,764		
First Steps' proportionate share of the net pension liability as percentage of covered payroll	202.28%	189.64%	194.84%		
Plan fiduciary net position as a percentage of the total pension liability	57.0%	59.9%	56.4%		

Note: The amounts presented above were determined as of June 30<sup>th</sup> of the preceding year.

Note: Only eight years of data were available; thus, only eight years were presented.

**South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness  
Required Supplementary Information -  
Schedule of the South Carolina First Steps  
to School Readiness' Contributions -  
South Carolina Retirement System  
As of June 30, 2021  
Last Ten Fiscal Years**

	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017
Contractually required contribution	\$ 487,385	\$ 424,022	\$ 351,180	\$ 412,089	\$ 586,573
Contributions in relation to the					
contractually required contribution	487,385	424,022	351,180	412,089	586,573
Contribution deficiency (excess)	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
First Steps covered payroll					
Contributions as a percentage of	\$ 3,132,288	\$ 2,725,077	\$ 2,411,951	\$ 3,039,003	\$ 5,074,161
covered payroll	15.56%	15.56%	14.56%	13.56%	11.56%
Contractually required contribution					
Contributions in relation to the	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012
contractually required contribution	\$ 412,387	\$ 321,255	\$ 302,083	\$ 306,315	\$ 219,508
Contribution deficiency (excess)	412,387	321,255	302,083	306,315	219,508
	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
First Steps covered payroll					
Contributions as a percentage of	\$ 3,728,634	\$ 2,947,293	\$ 2,849,840	\$ 2,889,764	\$ 2,302,129
covered payroll	11.06%	10.90%	10.60%	10.60%	9.54%

**South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness  
Required Supplementary Information -  
Schedule of the South Carolina First Steps  
to School Readiness' Proportionate Share of the Net  
OPEB Liability – South Carolina Health Insurance Trust Fund  
As of June 30, 2021  
Last Five Fiscal Years**

	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017
First Steps' proportion of the net OPEB liability	0.029563%	0.027578%	0.033958%	0.056381%	0.056381%
First Steps' proportionate share of the net OPEB liability	\$ 5,336,555	\$ 4,170,259	\$ 4,812,069	\$ 7,645,667	\$ 8,157,559
First Steps' covered payroll	\$ 2,725,077	\$ 2,411,951	\$ 2,928,455	\$ 4,760,094	\$ 3,728,634
First Steps' proportionate share of the net OPEB liability as percentage of covered payroll	195.83%	172.90%	164.32%	160.62%	218.78%
Plan fiduciary net position as a percentage of the total OPEB liability	8.39%	8.44%	7.91%	7.60%	6.62%

Note: The amounts presented above were determined as of June 30<sup>th</sup> of the preceding year.

Note: Only five years of data was available; thus, only five years are presented.

**South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness  
Required Supplementary Information -  
Schedule of the South Carolina First Steps  
to School Readiness' Contributions –  
South Carolina Health Insurance Trust Fund  
As of June 30, 2021  
Last Five Fiscal Years**

	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017
Contractually required contribution	\$ 195,768	\$ 170,317	\$ 145,923	\$ 161,065	\$ 232,315
Contributions in relation to the					
contractually required contribution	195,768	170,317	145,923	161,065	232,315
Contribution deficiency (excess)	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
First Steps covered payroll	\$ 3,132,288	\$ 2,725,077	\$ 2,411,951	\$ 2,928,455	\$ 4,760,094
Contributions as a percentage of					
Covered payroll	6.25%	6.25%	6.05%	5.50%	4.88%

Note: Only five years of data were available; thus, only five years are presented.

**SOUTH CAROLINA FIRST STEPS TO SCHOOL READINESS  
SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION -  
SCHEDULE OF PRIVATE 4K PROGRAM EXPENDITURES  
FOR THE YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2021**

	<u>General Fund</u>	<u>Private 4K Special Revenue Fund</u>	<u>Total</u>
<b>Expenditures</b>			
Private 4K provider costs	\$ —	\$ 14,819,034	\$ 14,819,034
Allocations to other entities	105,000	—	105,000
Contractual services	213,599	—	213,599
Salaries	1,248,574	—	1,248,574
Employer fringe benefits	502,756	—	502,756
Materials	500,673	—	500,673
Travel	75,961	—	75,961
Rent and leases	98,586	—	98,586
Total expenditures	<u>\$ 2,745,149</u>	<u>\$ 14,819,034</u>	<u>\$ 17,564,183</u>







# Greene Finney, LLP

CERTIFIED PUBLIC ACCOUNTANTS & ADVISORS

## REPORT ON INTERNAL CONTROL OVER FINANCIAL REPORTING AND ON COMPLIANCE AND OTHER MATTERS BASED ON AN AUDIT OF FINANCIAL STATEMENTS PERFORMED IN ACCORDANCE WITH *GOVERNMENT AUDITING STANDARDS*

### INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT

Mr. George L. Kennedy, CPA  
State Auditor  
Office of the State Auditor  
Columbia, South Carolina

We have audited, in accordance with the auditing standards generally accepted in the United States of America and the standards applicable to financial audits contained in *Government Auditing Standards* issued by the Comptroller General of the United States, the financial statements of the governmental activities and each major fund of South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness ("First Steps") as of and for the year ended June 30, 2021, and the related notes to the financial statements, which collectively comprise First Steps' basic financial statements, and have issued our report thereon dated September 28, 2021.

#### Internal Control Over Financial Reporting

In planning and performing our audit of the financial statements, we considered First Steps' internal control over financial reporting (internal control) to determine the audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances for the purpose of expressing our opinions on the financial statements, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of First Steps' internal control. Accordingly, we do not express an opinion on the effectiveness of First Steps' internal control.

*A deficiency in internal control* exists when the design or operation of a control does not allow management or employees, in the normal course of performing their assigned functions, to prevent, or detect and correct, misstatements on a timely basis. *A material weakness* is a deficiency, or a combination of deficiencies, in internal control, such that there is a reasonable possibility that a material misstatement of the entity's financial statements will not be prevented, or detected and corrected on a timely basis. *A significant deficiency* is a deficiency, or a combination of deficiencies, in internal control that is less severe than a material weakness, yet important enough to merit attention by those charged with governance.

Our consideration of internal control was for the limited purpose described in the first paragraph of this section and was not designed to identify all deficiencies in internal control that might be material weaknesses or significant deficiencies. Given these limitations, during our audit we did not identify any deficiencies in internal control that we consider to be material weaknesses. However, material weaknesses may exist that have not been identified.

#### Compliance and Other Matters

As part of obtaining reasonable assurance about whether First Steps' financial statements are free from material misstatement, we performed tests of its compliance with certain provisions of laws, regulations, contracts, and grant agreements, noncompliance with which could have a direct and material effect on the determination of financial statement amounts. However, providing an opinion on compliance with those provisions was not an objective of our audit, and accordingly, we do not express such an opinion. The results of our tests disclosed no instances of noncompliance or other matters that are required to be reported under *Government Auditing Standards*.

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### **Purpose of this Report**

The purpose of this report is solely to describe the scope of our testing of internal control and compliance and the results of that testing, and not to provide an opinion on the effectiveness of the entity's internal control or on compliance. This report is an integral part of an audit performed in accordance with *Government Auditing Standards* in considering the entity's internal control and compliance. Accordingly, this communication is not suitable for any other purpose.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Greene Finney, LLP".

Greene Finney, LLP  
Mauldin, South Carolina  
September 28, 2021